HOW TO PRESENT AT AN ACADEMIC CONFERENCE

Facilitators: Dr. Connie Summers
Dr. Isela Ocegueda
Preparation

• Carefully review all of the instructions on your acceptance letter/email

✓ **Know deadlines:** do you need to confirm your attendance? register for the conference? when is your presentation due?
✓ **What are the check-in guidelines?** What do you have to do and where?
✓ **If you’re presenting a poster:** what is the accepted size of the poster? When is your time to set up? Where?
Conferences Are Professional Events

- Because conferences are considered professional events, you want to reflect your best professional self.
Conferences Are Professional Events

Dress to Impress

- **T-shirts**, no matter how "like" you think they are, are not appropriate for an interview or most jobs.
- Hats aren't going to win you any points. Comb your hair and leave the cap at home.
- A button-down shirt and a tie for the gentlemen and an appropriately fitting shirt for the girls will keep employers impressed. Add a suit jacket for an even dandier look.
- Avoid jeans of holes, actually...just avoid jeans altogether.
- Get rid of the starchy attitude and greet your interviewer with enthusiasm and a firm handshake. Remember to make eye contact!
- Dress to impress from head to toe...no flip-flops, sneakers or flannel boots.

Infographics by Addison Taylor

Attire

**Business casual**

- This interview look would be appropriate for these industries: IT, startups, teaching, entry-level government, engineering, aerospace (non-management), architecture, health-care/Pharmaceuticals, research, social media, advertising/PR and retail.
- Detail adds interest but doesn't distract.
- Blouse color, collar style go well with the suit.
- Minimal jewelry
- Sweatshirt and pants fit well
- Casual, yet polished

**Business professional**

- This more formal interview look works for these industries: healthcare management and administration, biotechnology, banking, personal financial services, academic administration, hospitality, pharmaceutical sales and aerospace management.
- Tip: Check yourself in the mirror before leaving the house.
- Could wear heels rather than flats to increase formality
- Pencil skirt not too short, not too long
Speaking well at a conference

- Principles of Effective Talks

1) Communicate your arguments and evidence
2) Persuade your audience
3) Engage and entertain

Source: “How to Give an Academic Talk”
Paul N. Edwards, University of Michigan
Speaking well at a conference

Rules of Thumb

• Talk (rather than read)
• Stand and move
• Vary the pitch of your voice
• Speak loudly & clearly (not speeding), facing the audience
• Make eye contact (avoid siding)
• Focus on main points
• Use visuals: outlines, images, charts
• Finish within your time limit
• Rehearse & get feedback
• Summarize main points at the beginning & at the end
• Notice your audience & respond to its needs
• Emulate excellent speakers
Speaking well at a conference

Preparing Your Talk
• Hack it down to size
• 100 words per minutes; for a 15 minute talk, that’s 1500 words. Plan what you want to say very carefully.
• Make an outline

Vocal Technique
• Speak from gut, not from throat
• Speak at the bottom of your vocal range
• Adequate volume—most people don’t realize how quietly they speak
• Silent moments: pause briefly at ends of sentences/between slides (drink water if necessary)
Time Management

Oral Presentation

• Respect time
• 15-20 minutes + questions
• Be interested in other speakers
• Practice, Practice, Practice

Poster presentation

• Respect time
• 2-4 minute presentation + questions
• Include your listeners
• Practice, Practice, Practice
Activity

• Can you explain your project in 2 minutes?
  • Essential components
    • Why?
    • What did you do/find?
    • Why is that important?

• Let’s Practice!
Responding to Questions

• Be respectful

• Be thoughtful
  • Take a second
  • Listen to the question before speaking
  • Ask for clarification

• What do you say when you don’t know how to answer?

• Remember: You know your topic/data more than anyone else who will ask you questions!
Conferences Are Opportunities for Networking

• End your PowerPoint with your conclusions and your contact information

• 1-page summary of main points and your contact information (make this a professional-looking document)

• Business cards; it’s okay to create your own

• Keep all documents professional!
Funding Assistance

• The Graduate School offers travel grants to graduate students who have been accepted to present their work at an academic conference.

• You can learn more and access the online application by visiting our website, under the tab called “Funding Opportunities”:  
http://graduate.utep.edu/scholarships_current.html